

Working with Local Community Colleges

Agencies: Montgomery County (PA) HA (50 WtW vouchers)
Montgomery County Community College
NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation & Development (700 WtW Vouchers)
Ann Arbor HA (217 WtW Vouchers)

Challenge

Low-income families face several challenges to their struggle of becoming self-sufficient. Examples of these challenges include unemployment, limited skills, minimal education and lack of childcare. Current budget cuts have forced sites to provide fewer services with limited staff. Consequently, Public Housing Agencies are experiencing great difficulty in providing adequate supportive services to their WtW/FSS clients.

Solution

In response to these challenges, the following three housing agencies have created a strong partnership with their local community colleges to make use of existing programs and to develop new programs tailored to the needs of their clients.

The Montgomery County (HA) through its collaboration with Montgomery County Community College provides:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) for adults functioning from a non-reading level.
- English (ESL) as a second language
- GED testing and training on date casting (TV quality images on computer)
- Even Start Literacy program- a family oriented program in conjunction with our local school districts that serves parents and children up to age seven
- Workforce development and continuing education programs.
- Career services and counseling- career exploration workshops to assist students to identify career goals, develop job search strategies, a job board listing, employment opportunities, resume writing and critiquing services, campus job recruitment, interviewing techniques and peer and professional tutoring services.
- Other programs offered: public safety programs like emergency medical technician, paramedic, fire service, municipal police academy, professional development and certifications in areas such as auto emissions and inspections, child care provider programs, computer professional certificate, dental assisting, medical terminology, payroll, entrepreneur, serve-safe for food

handlers, and a certificate of teaching excellence in higher education to enhance teaching skills of college faculty.

- New Choices Program- a 60 hour career development and training program. The program was designed for single parents, displaced homemakers, and women who have been home for years with their children and need to go back to work because of divorce, separation or low income need.
- New Options Program – focuses on getting women and men into careers where the opposite sex is dominant in that particular profession.
- Tuition free- persons that have been affected by the mass layoffs from business and industry may enroll at the community college for a maximum of one term on a tuition free basis.

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development in conjunction with Laguardia Community College provides:

- Career Advancement Program includes job training, education and job placement.
- Job training includes nurse aid certification, medical records, billing, computer information technology, GED, ESL, Adult Basic Education, child care provider, starting a home-based small business and home health aide.
- Job Placement- includes an employment center with employment specialists who help with resumes and provide job skills workshops. Employment specialists are able to match participants with potential employment. Clients are given referrals and scheduled for job interviews.

Ann Arbors HA has been able to utilize the resources of unpaid graduate and undergraduate interns from their local community college to augment staffing needs. Interns are involved in tasks such as:

- Writing and publishing a monthly WtW newsletter.
- Assisting with individual needs assessments and resource referral.
- Developing an evaluation tool for program performance.
- Developing workshops taught by fellow university students.
- Screening for program eligibility.
- General office assistance items such as typing, filing and mailing correspondence.

Implementation

In determining how to make an effective connection between your agency and the local colleges, it is necessary to first identify the needs of your agency and to gather as much information as possible about your local community college. Once that has been accomplished, it is now time to call the college president and schedule an appointment to explain your program. It is also important, that once

you have scheduled the appointment you take all of the appropriate paperwork. Written program material will help the person you are speaking with to visualize your program and it will also give him/her something to refer to later. Also, your local welfare office may be able to assist your agency in making connections with the appropriate community college contacts. ***The key is to visit, knock on doors; visit knock on doors and visit and knock on doors some more.*** Visit the admissions office, registration, the career center, the learning lab, the library and the bookstore. Make contacts and work at maintaining those contacts.

Above all, don't be shy about expressing the needs of your constituency. You should also however, share what resources you bring to the table. Ask questions such as, "Does your institution have financial resources for such services? Would your college be willing to partner on a grant application with the Housing Authority and/or provide some media publicity for the college and the Housing Authority, acknowledging your partnership?"

One of the most effective ways of educating families with regard to community college services is to keep plenty of catalogues available in your office, financial aid forms, phone numbers, and registration information.

Montgomery Community College prides itself on being proactive with the community to determine its needs. The college is in a state of constant outreach, ensuring that its resources are made available to both organizations and the business community. Conversely, an organization or business may come to the college with specific needs identified for a specific segment of the community. Regardless of whether it is a particular course, workshop, financial opportunity, or grant opportunity, the organization would present the need and Montgomery Community College would then identify methods to support those needs. If necessary, the college may find need to reach out to another partnering organization and collaborate in order to provide services jointly.

In most communities, businesses understand and value the importance of providing as much support to their employees as possible. Sometimes because of scheduling and commitments outside of the office these employees may be unable to come personally to the college. When this has happened in the past, Montgomery Community College provided all of the necessary resources, allowing the classes to be conducted on-site at the business.

Results

In today's changing economic climate, dominated by budget and resource cuts, it has become necessary and vital for PHAs to work diligently and responsibly at creating partnerships with other stakeholders in each of their respective communities whose services will meet the needs of their WtW/FSS clients. The three agencies cited in this report, along with many others have been able to effectively and efficiently collaborate with their local community colleges to not

only take advantage of the services offered but to also identify and tailor programs necessary to service the specific needs of their clients.

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